

Committee on Resources

Witness Testimony

Statement of REESE F. LUKEI, JR.
NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF THE AMERICAN DISCOVERY TRAIL
A PROJECT OF THE AMERICAN DISCOVERY TRAIL SOCIETY
Presented to the United States House of Representatives Resources Committee
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS

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Subject: H.R. 588

THE NATIONAL DISCOVERY TRAILS ACT OF 1997

Chairman Hansen and members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Reese F. Lukei, Jr. I am the National Coordinator of the American Discovery Trail, a project of the American Discovery Trail Society to develop and establish our nation's first coast-to-coast multi-use hiking trail, and to have it authorized as the 21st long-distance trail under the National Trails System Act of 1968 in a new long-distance trail category to be known as National Discovery Trails.

The National Trails System Act of 1968 mandates a "national system of trails." Under this Act, eight National Scenic Trails and 12 National Historic Trails have been designated by Congress. In addition over 800 shorter and mostly local National Recreation Trails have been designated by the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior. While some of these trails do connect or overlap, there has been no previous intentional effort to link them together into a system nor to include urban areas as part of long-distance trails.

NATIONAL DISCOVERY TRAILS:

During the past 30 years there have been many new developments affecting trails and the people who use them. With a greater awareness of the benefits of outdoor exercise to our personal health and a greater awareness of our environmental surroundings, people have discovered trails in ever-growing numbers. Over 800 trails have been designated National Recreation Trails, mostly in urban areas. Cities large and small all have or are developing trails systems to accommodate this increased demand. In 1996 on National Trails Day, over 1,000,000 people participated in over 3,000 events on trails in their local area. The proposed National Discovery Trails category and the American Discovery Trail are an outgrowth of this intense interest in trails, especially at the local level.

National Discovery Trails would have several important features that would enhance the National Trails System and meet the needs of trail users. Currently there are no congressionally designated trails that are primarily intended to tie existing trails and urban areas into the national network envisioned by the National Trails System Act. National Discovery Trails provide this opportunity by linking existing and developing national, regional, and local trails into an integrated system, much like the interstate highway system. Similarly, these national trails would connect urban areas where most Americans live and work with rural and backcountry regions. Trail users would have an opportunity to experience a wide variety of physiographic regions and human settlement patterns and could gain a sense of national connection.

Recent studies, listed in Addendum A, addressing the issue of outdoor recreation, and specifically trails use, by the federal government, the outdoor industry, the housing industry, and a coalition of citizen organizations have all indicated a greater need for trails. The proposed category of National Discovery Trails and the American Discovery Trail project have intentionally addressed the following aspects of these studies:

- Trails should be established closer to where people live and work;
- Trails should be developed through grassroots efforts working in partnership with land managers;
- Trails should be linked to form an interconnected system.

National Discovery Trails would be defined to fulfill four specific purposes:

- Specifically emphasize linkages with other national, regional and local trails;
- Emphasize connections with urban and metropolitan areas;
- Include existing trails and could be located along roadways if necessary to make the trail continuous;
- Administration of the trail to be shared between land managers and a competent trailwide nonprofit organization.

AMERICAN DISCOVERY TRAIL:

The American Discovery Trail (ADT) has been designed, developed and established to address the intent and objectives of the National Trails System Act and the National Discovery Trails definition.

Project Objectives:

The effort to establish the ADT began in the fall of 1989 as a joint project of the American Hiking Society, a national nonprofit organization devoted to establishing, protecting and maintaining foot trails in America, and Backpacker Magazine. The following major objectives were identified:

- Establish the first permanent coast-to-coast multi-use hiking trail through a nationwide grassroots effort in cooperation with federal, state and local land managers;
- Connect together as many existing national, regional, state and local trails as possible;
- Include in the trail route major metropolitan areas as well as smaller cities and towns, thus bringing the trail as close to where people live and work as possible;
- Provide incentives and encourage the development of new trails and trail support organizations, and increase citizen participation in the upkeep of the trails they use.

Trail Route:

The ADT is 6,356 miles long and traverses 15 states and the District of Columbia. It begins (or ends) on the shores of the Pacific Ocean at Point Reyes National Seashore just north of San Francisco. From there it crosses California, Nevada, Utah, and Colorado, where in Denver it splits into two routes. The northern Midwest route winds through Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and a short section of Ohio. The southern Midwest route explores Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana. After reconnecting just west of Cincinnati, the route continues through Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, Maryland, Washington, DC, and Delaware, where it ends (or begins) with two feet in the Atlantic Ocean at Cape Henlopen State Park. Addendum B lists ADT trail mileage in each state.

Trail Development:

The route of the ADT was developed through the cooperative efforts of citizens working with federal, state and local land managers, state and local economic development and tourism commissions, state and local planning and transportation departments, and state departments of natural resources through each states' trails coordinator. The activities within each state have been coordinated and administered through the efforts of a volunteer ADT Coordinator. The original route was determined by a three person scouting team in 1990-91 during which they hiked and biked the trails and roads that were selected by the citizen committees in each state. Subsequent to that event, efforts have continued to refine the route and to obtain the permission of land managers to mark the route with ADT markers. Over 3,000 miles of the route are currently marked.

The ADT links together 5 of the 8 National Scenic Trails, 10 of the 11 National Historic Trails, 23 National Recreation Trails, 35 rail-trails and over 100 other regional, state and local trails. In addition the ADT passes through 14 National Parks, 16 National Forests, dozens of State Parks and Forests, and many local recreational areas. The National Park Service feasibility study estimates that the corridor of the ADT route contains over 10,000 historic, cultural and natural sites of significance.

The ADT is the first long-distance trail that has been intentionally routed to pass through or near some of our largest cities such as San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, Reno, Denver, Omaha, Lincoln, Des Moines, Davenport, Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago, Evansville, Cincinnati, and Washington, DC. Many smaller cities and towns are also on the route of the ADT, bringing the trail close to where people live. 32 million Americans live within 20 miles of the ADT route. But there are also many opportunities to visit remotely located forests, deep canyons, and the vast wide open deserts of the west. The variety of experiences that one can expect is as large as one can dream, from city sidewalks and parks to the most distantly located mountain top.

Local Incentive:

The ADT has provided an incentive to local citizen groups to develop new trail projects, regional or citywide planning efforts, and has been of assistance to projects already underway by citizens or municipal entities. Some examples are:

- Delaware Greenways Project - Delaware
- Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis Recreational Trail - Maryland
- North Bend Rail-Trail - West Virginia
- Buckeye Trail - Ohio
- Cardinal Greenway - Indiana
- River-to-River Trail - Illinois
- Great River Trail - Illinois and Iowa
- Gateway Trailnet - Illinois and Missouri
- Flint Hills Nature Trail - Kansas
- Waterloo/Evansdale/Cedar Falls Regional Trails System - Iowa
- Nebraska State Trails Plan - Nebraska
- Ute Pass Trail Corridor - Colorado
- Great Western Trail - Utah
- Washoe Lake State Park - Nevada
- Western States Trail - California

- East Coast Greenway - Portland, Maine to Miami, Florida
- Trans-Canada Trail - Canada

At least four new trails organizations have been formed as a result of the ADT:

- River to River Trail Society - southern Illinois
- Southern Indiana Hiking Club - Corydon, Indiana
- Tri-City Hikers - Evansville, Indiana
- Comstock Hiking Club - Virginia City, Nevada

There are currently 40 trail projects underway in 12 ADT states totaling over 1,000 miles that will by approximately the year 2002 move the route of the ADT off paved or gravel roads and onto trail. All of these projects are as a result of local citizen efforts in cooperation with the appropriate state or local agencies.

Private Property:

Fifty-eight miles of the trail crosses private property, and then only by landowner invitation on existing rights-of-way or by agreement. States with no trail on private property are Delaware, Maryland, Washington, DC, Kentucky, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, and Utah. Addendum C lists the private property locations.

Project Funding:

The development of the ADT has been accomplished with a minimal amount of federal government funds, and that has come through the cooperative efforts of the personnel in the local and regional offices of the National Park Service, USDA Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, plus the cost of the National Park Service feasibility and desirability study.

Funding of the project, estimated at \$3 million, has come from the members of American Hiking Society, the volunteer state coordinators who have funded their own efforts, and our major corporate sponsors, Backpacker Magazine, Coleman/Peak One, Ecco USA, Magellan Systems, Royal Robbins, Inc., Trails Illustrated and about 20 other businesses in the outdoor industry.

Grassroots Support and Partnerships:

The American Discovery Trail has generated a nationwide constituency of grassroots groups, private sector businesses, and local, state and federal agencies to establish a route which is at once nationally and locally significant as it weaves its way through communities large and small, and through national, state and local parks and forests. It is equally important for connecting trails which alone might not be of national significance, but linked together are essential to a comprehensive national system and form a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

In its short lifetime, the ADT development effort has strengthened and broadened the trails community. In an era when government is reaching out to the private sector, looking for strong partnerships, the ADT represents partnership on every level: a strong partnership between a national nonprofit advocacy group and private sector businesses, partnerships between local trails groups and local agencies working to find the best route across this country, and partnerships with local businesses and state agencies which see the ADT

as a source of potential economic benefit.

Summary:

The American Discovery Trail is about people and for people. It is a trail that winds through forests, mountains, communities large and small, and has involved a large number of active volunteers and partnerships with trails organizations, local and national businesses, and a huge number of local, state and federal agencies. The ADT combines the qualities of national scenic, historic, and recreation trails, but its real strength is that it provides a connection. The connection is between trails, between cities and the backcountry, and between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The American Discovery Trail deserves to be the first National Discovery Trail. The American Discovery Trail Society urges your support of House bill H.R. 588

Thank you.

Addendum A - National Studies and Surveys

President's Commission on Americans Outdoors:

The 1988 President's Commission on Americans Outdoors called for "the creation of a vast network of hiking and jogging trails, bikeways, and bridlepaths." The commission envisioned a nationwide system of trails that would "tie this country together with threads of green," linking communities and providing access to the natural world.

National Trails Agenda Project:

The 1990 "Trails for All Americans" report of the National Trails Agenda Project, an affiliation of nonprofit organizations representing a wide variety of trail users, and supported by the National Park Service, identified several goals for a national system of trails, including:

- Trail opportunities should exist within 15 minutes of most American's home or work place;
- The system should be made up of a combination of federal, state, local and private trails, with entities working together to make an interconnected system;
- Trails must be planned as part of the nation's infrastructure as are sewers, utilities and highways;
- Planning for trail corridors and networks should be a grassroots effort to ensure there is adequate support for their development, management, and long-term protection.

USDA Forest Service:

The USDA Forest Service long range planning forecast, An Analysis of the Outdoor Recreation and Wilderness Situation in the United States: 1989-2040, projects a significant increase in trail related activities in future years with a desire that these activities take place closer to where people live.

Percent Increase by the Years

<u>Trail Activity</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2030</u>	<u>2040</u>
Walking for pleasure	116	131	146	164	177
Day hiking	131	161	198	244	293

Backpacking	134	164	196	230	255
Running/jogging	133	163	197	234	262
Bicycle riding	125	148	173	202	222
Horseback riding	123	141	160	177	190

Urban Land Institute:

In 1995 the Urban Land Institute released a study conducted by American Lives, Inc. indicating what American home buyers are seeking when shopping for a new home. Of the 39 features that 1994 buyers defined as crucial in persuading them to buy in a particular new community, "plenty of hiking and biking paths" ranked 3rd. The report states that, "Ideally the paths meander through wooded areas and parklands, and abut some homeowners' lots to enhance a 'sense of interactivity among private houses and leisure-time, fun activities' by residents of all ages.

1995 Human Powered Outdoor Recreation - State of the Industry Report:

This report issued by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association and the Outdoor Recreation Coalition of America contains many significant statements and statistics related to who uses trails, for what purpose, and where these trails are located.

- Over 75% of people age 16 and older participate in some form of outdoor recreation.
- Walking is the most popular activity, enjoyed by over 70% Of Americans.
- Places close to where the most people live serve recreationists more often than our National Parks.
- The main reasons people recreate outdoors are to have fun, for relaxation, and for exercise or their health.
- The estimated total annual economic contribution of human powered outdoor recreation is \$35 billion including direct and associated economic contributions.

Addendum B - American Discovery Trail State Mileage

<u>State</u>	<u>Miles</u>
Delaware	45
Maryland	250
Washington, DC	17
West Virginia	276
Ohio	456
Kentucky	10
Indiana	521
Illinois	496
Missouri	346
Kansas	574
Iowa	504
Nebraska	515
Colorado	931

Utah	560
Nevada	466
California	<u>389</u>
Total miles	6,356

Addendum C - American Discovery Trail - Private Property Locations

<u>Private Property Location</u>	<u>Miles</u>
Ohio - Buckeye Trail, 10 sections involving Mead Paper, General Electric and eight other land owners	30
Iowa - Hoover Valley Nature Trail, a nonprofit owned rail-trail	25
Indiana - campus of Hanover College	1
California - Tahoe National Forest, five locations that are part of Western States Trail. Two parcels to be purchased, three with easements.	3/4
Indiana - Indiana Power and Light right-of-way near New Albany	1/2
Nevada - Temporary location until trails completed in Washoe Lake State Park	1/2
Illinois - Gravel road near Pomona - part of River to River Trail. Easement in process.	1/8
West Virginia - Farm field near Spelter. Temporary until Harrison County rail-trail completed in 1997.	<u>1/8</u>
Total miles on private property	58

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